

Proceeding: In the Matter of 1998 Biennial Regulatory Review -- Amendment of Part of the ☒ Record 1 of 1  
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In reference to the proposed changes to the Amateur Radio Licensing structure, I totally disagree with the direction taken by the FCC.

First, your plans to combine the Novice, Technician and Technician Plus categories into one category entitled "Amateur" will only cause a lot of the now licensed Novice and Technician Plus licensees to either upgrade to General or higher or to totally abandon Amateur Radio. The Novice and Technician Plus licensees have worked hard and long to get the requisite 5 wpm code. The ones that can upgrade have and the ones that for one reason or another cannot have remained at the licensee level, but have not lost interest in "ham" radio.

As a Technician Plus, I worked very, very hard to achieve the required 5 wpm morse code. With a "slight" hearing disability which makes hearing/catching the nuances of the dit dahs of morse code it was very hard for me to achieve the 5 wpm needed. And, because of such, I have not upgraded as I once very much wanted to. As a Technician Plus, I have avidly pursued several interests within Amateur Radio including working within the Amateur Radio Emergency Services and Radio Amateur Emergency Services within the State of Virginia, I have maintained a position within several clubs, and I do a monthly newsletter.

Your upcoming proposed changes will lump my hard work in with others who have no real interest in "ham" radio...those who are now Technicians with no code! Does your proposal have the desired effect of making me want to upgrade to a higher level with a 13 wpm morse code requirement? No! Because of my disability with hearing the nuances of morse code, all your proposal does is dishearten me and makes me want to just give up being a "ham" altogether. And, I believe that I am not the only one who will feel this way.

Instead of encouraging "hams" to upgrade, your proposal discourages them. If Technicians wanted to upgrade, and under the rules now, they could only do so by passing the 5 wpm code, what makes you think they will upgrade when you are making the rules harder by asking for 13 wpm? Most of the Technicians now do not upgrade and with the requirement being 13 wpm to upgrade, even less will upgrade.

I agree, that there do need to be some changes. I would like to see the your proposed changes to incorporate the following:

1. To incorporate the now Novice and Technician Plus Class licensees into  
one category entitled Technician; keeping the 5 wpm morse code requirement.
2. To incorporate the now Technician (no code) Class into a category entitled Amateur and keeping them as no code licensees.

Morse code is hard to learn at the 5 wpm requirement as it now stands. Very few no coders (Technicians) decide to upgrade into Novice and Technician Plus as your findings point out. Thus, it stands to reason, that when putting the code to a 13 wpm

requirement there will be even fewer who will want to upgrade. Thus limiting the number of coded hams. But, while you are limiting the number of coded hams, you will be adding several times more noncoded hams. This will put an overwhelming stressful burden on the frequencies now available to the non-coded hams. To relieve this stress, perhaps changing the frequency allocations as they now stand would help. Perhaps the frequency allocations could be changed in the following manner:

1. The newly created Amateur Class level (as stated above) should definitely have more frequency allocated to them, perhaps the old Technician Plus allocations.
2. The newly created Technican Class level should be granted the frequency allocations of the General class.
3. The General Class level should be granted the frequency allocations of the Advanced class.
4. The Advance Class level could share or be granted part of the Extra Class level frequency allocations as they now stand.

All in all, I agree that the Amateur Radio community as a whole needs to see a change. But your proposal as it now stands will condemn the Amateur Radio community instead of allowing it more growth from new licensees or from upgrading licensees. Please take the above submitted changes into consideration when making your decision.

Thank you.

Bonnie V. Smith, N4QPB  
Technician Plus  
Amateur Radio Licensee